

Vocabulary Related to Journalism Law/Ethics

Accuracy

Copyright

Fairness

Good taste

Libel

Publication

Identification

Injury

Fault

Malice

Obscenity

Privacy

Prior review

Public figures/officials

Restraint

Service mark

Trademark

KEY TERMS

ACCURACY: exactness, correctness of information.

COPYRIGHT: exclusive right to use and distribute original literary, artistic or photographic materials. *property right*

FAIRNESS: balanced, objective and honest.

FAULT: responsibility for mistake or offense.

GOOD TASTE: what is proper or socially acceptable, as judged by personal standards.

IDENTIFICATION: naming the individuals or a collective group so the reader knows who is being referred to, even if a name isn't used.

INJURY: damage to a person or reputation.

LIBEL: a false printed statement of fact that attacks a person's reputation or good name.

MALICE: knowledge that the information was false, or reckless disregard of whether it was false or not. Public figures/officials must prove malice to recover damages in a libel suit.

OBSCENITY: is a form of speech unprotected by the Constitution. The Supreme Court defines obscenity as something by community standards arouses sexual desire, depicts sexual conduct in a patently offensive way, and lacks serious literary, artistic, political or scientific value. In this context, four-letter words or vulgarities would not be obscene according to the Supreme Court; however, in a school publication they would be highly offensive to many readers.

PRIVACY: invasion of privacy is another form of expression unprotected by the Constitution. Every person has a right to privacy unless that right is waived. If a journalist or photographer gains unwelcome entry into a private place such as a private home, a restroom or locker room, that is intrusion. If a person is in a public place such as a city park, the person should have no expectation of privacy. Classrooms present a difficult area. Sometimes courts define classrooms as public spaces, sometimes private spaces.

PRIOR REVIEW: the act of looking at material before it is released to the public or published.

PUBLIC FIGURES/OFFICIALS: a person in the public spotlight such as a rock star, movie star or an elected official (mayor or governor). A public figure/official can only claim damages in a libel suit if the public figure/official can prove the journalist acted with malice or with reckless disregard of the truth.

RESTRAINT: limiting or holding back material from being made public or published.

SERVICE MARK: a legally-protected slogan used to promote a product, service or idea.

TRADEMARK: a word, name, symbol, device or any combination of these items used to identify a product by a manufacturer. Most trademarks carry one of these symbols: ®, TM. These materials cannot be used for any commercial purpose without trademark infringement. You can use a trademark to identify a product itself. You can't use a trademark as a theme without permission.